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REMARKS

The present application was originally filed with 13 Claims. In a Supplemental Preliminary Amendment mailed September 21, 2001, Claims 1-6 and 11-13 were cancelled without prejudice and Claims 14-27 were added. Thus, Claims 7-10 and 14-27 were pending. In a Restriction Requirement mailed September 27, 2002, the Examiner restricted the Claims into three Groups, with Claims 7-10 and 14-15 in Group I, Claims 7-8 and 14-15 in Group II, and Claims 16-27 in Group III. In a Response filed October 9, 2002, Applicants elected the Claims in Group I with traverse, and cancelled Claims 16-27. As indicated in the present Office Action, 7-10 and 14-15 are pending in the present application. However, Applicants have cancelled Claim 7 without prejudice. Thus, upon entry of the present Response, Claims 8-10 and 14-15 are pending.

Applicants note that the Examiner has vacated payment of the Issue Fee previously submitted in the present case and has reopened prosecution of the present case. In the present Office Action, the Examiner has indicated that Claims 8-10 and 14-15 are allowable, but has rejected Claim 7 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) or (e), as being allegedly anticipated by Wells et al. (EP 0 251 446), Bott et al. (US Pat. No. 5,801,038), or Siekstra et al. (WO 96/34946 or US Pat. No. 5,837,517).

While Applicants must respectfully disagree with the Examiner's rejections and arguments, in order to further the prosecution of the present application and Applicants' business interests, yet without acquiescing to the Examiner's arguments, Applicants have cancelled Claim 7. Applicants expressly reserve the right to pursue Claim 7 and/or additional similar and/or broader Claims in one or more subsequent application(s).

As the Examiner has indicated that Claims 8-10 and 14-15 are allowable, Applicants respectfully request that this application be passed to allowance.

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CONCLUSION

In light of the above remarks, the Applicants believe the pending claims are in condition for allowance and issuance of a formal Notice of Allowance at an early date is respectfully requested. If a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (650) 846-5838.

Respectfully submitted,

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